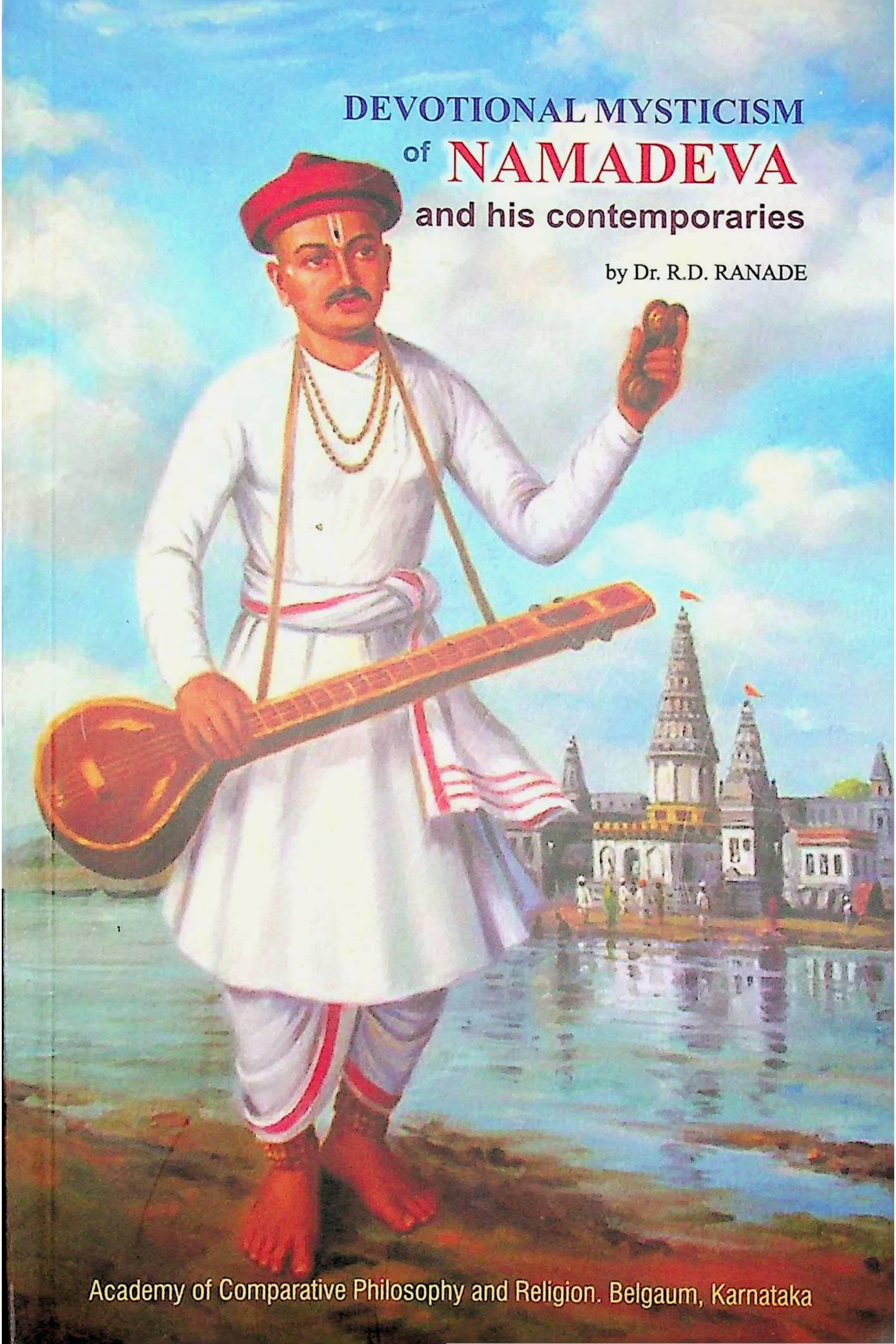
DEVOTIONAL MYSTICISM of NAMADEVA
and his contemporaries

by Dr. R.D. RANADE



Academy of Comparative Philosophy and Religion. Belgaum, Karnataka

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NAMADEVA

By Dr. R. D. RANADE

Academy of Comparative Philosophy and Religion,
Belagavi, Karnataka.

Devotional Mysticism Namadeva

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FOREWORD

Shri Gurudev Dr. R. D. Ranade, M.A., D.Litt. Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, Allahabad University was one of the greatest mystic saints and world renowned Philosopher from Modern India. His Literary work from the books 'The Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy' to 'Bhagavadgita - as the philosophy of God Realization', have left behind glorious imprints.

Gurudev served as the Vice-Chancellor, Professor, Head and Dean of Philosophy at the Allahabad University guiding and mentoring intellectual luminaries of Modern India. For the Global Family, he had a vision and concern to achieve holistic welfare of human kind through sustained awareness of spiritual unity in diversity.

The Diversities of spiritual faiths were envisioned to be contained by the unity of spiritual reason through the establishment of the Academy of Comparative Philosophy and Religion, Belagavi, Karnataka. Having conceived the ACPR in 1924 at Pune, he proceeded on his mission to deliver the ACPR, Belagavi in 1952, as an immortal heritage to the world at large.

ACPR's Head Quarters is Hindwadi, Belagavi is registered as a Public Trust under Registration No.E-233(BGM)/1952. ACPR publishes an English Quarterly National Journal 'The Pathway to God' along with republication and reprint of original classic philosophical works.

As a fitting tribute to Gurudev and his vision, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the Philosopher-Statesman-President of India, took pride in volunteering to inaugurate the head quarters of ACPR in 1965.

ACPR is a global gallery where eternity keeps whispering and provides an all millennium venue for the meetings of 'Intellectually inclined' amongst God's Children. ACPR is an unusually divine mansion with its large and open ambience without conferring centrality of radiation to any specific religion, faith, cult or heritage with an open acceptance in the Universal belief of a divine humanity.

Objectives of the Institution are as below:

a) To work for the spiritual unity of Mankind and consequent peace and goodwill upon earth, bringing together intellectual and spiritually minded persons through,

1) Spiritual Symposiums,
2) Study and Research
3) Lectures
4) Meetings & Conference
5) Religious and philosophical Publications.
6) To start research centers in all the faculties.

About two years ago when His Holiness Shri Shiddheshwar Swamiji who is (A Spiritual Ambassador to the humanity) of 'Dnyanayogashram' (Jnana Yoga ashram) of Vijayapur visited ACPR Belagavi, suggested the task of re-printing "Mystical Experience of Maharashtra Saints in philosophical contexts" authored by Gurudeo Ranade in five sections to bring it to the comprehension of the layman by incorporating pictures relating to spiritual experiences in the life of these saints.

Sant Namadev(13-14 Century), was a contemporary of Sant Jnaneshawar, composed the abhangs with a unique sense of modernness, which explains their evolution and continued adaption. Having started a life of lawlessness, Namadev converts to a life of devotion by seeking the blessings of yogis from across caste and various professions. True to his name, Sant Namadev places a perpetual insistence on the significance and efficacy of the name of God, as it is the only remedy narrated in the eighteen puranas. Namadev's abhangs were also a powerful medium to discourse on social issues. As he beautifully, presents, all those who see God in others are saints. His Spiritual inspirations and social inclinations introduced the concept of Democratic Mysticism.

Shri Siddeshwar Swamiji has been a source of inspiration and guidance in this noble task. We appreciate the generous contribution of donors in meeting the cost of printing and a special mention of thanks to M/s. Motilal Banarsidass, the original publishers of the book.

I acknowledge sincere efforts of the artist, Sri Chandrashekhar Ranganekar, for his impressive illustrations of pictures inserted in the book.

I thank, Shri Ashok Dhond, Proprietor of Impressions Printing Press, Belagavi for his support, concern and promptness in completing the five parts within a short period of time.

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Place : Belagavi.

Maruti B. Zirali,
Secretary,
On behalf of Board of Trustees,
ACPR Belagavi.

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CHAPTER I.

Biographical Introduction

1. A short History of Vitthala Sampradaya.

When we come to the age of Nāmadeva, we come upon an age which is filled with the echoes of the Sāmpradāya of Vitthala. The great saint Jñānadeva lived only for a short time to be able to spread during his life-time the Sāmpradāya of Vitthala far and wide. The work, which had been begun by Jñānadeva, was continued by Nāmadeva, who, though he was born at the same time as Jñānadeva, lived for more than half a century after him, during which period he became the pillar of the Vitthala Sāmpradāya at Pandharpur. It was in his time most especially that Pandharpur gained its great importance. It is true that the shrine of Vitthala at Pandharpur was erected even before the days of Jñānadeva and Nāmadeva. It is probable that Pundalīka was the first great high priest of the God of Pandharpur. As to where and when this saint actually lived we have not any records to determine. It seems, however, that Pundalīka was a Canarese saint, and the temple which is built in his memory is on the sands of the Bhīmā. As to whether this temple of Pundalīka is to be regarded as a Samādhi of Pundalīka, or merely a temple erected to his memory, we have again no evidence to determine. It is, however, to be noted that temple contains a Lingam of Śiva, and even here, as in the case of Jñānadeva, we have to remember that Pundalīka, who was one of the greatest of the devotees of Vitthala, had a Lingam of Śiva erected in memory of him. In fact, all these saints of Pandharpur knew no distinction between Śaivism and Vaishnavism. As Dr. P. R. Bhandarkar has cleverly pointed out, the epithet, Pānduranga, the "white-limbed" God, which is really the name of Śiva, is here transferred to Vitthala, just to show that there is ultimately no difference between Śaivism and Vaishnavism. We have already seen in the Chapter on Jñāneśvara that the earliest inscription of Vitthala and Rakhumāī is to be found in Ālandī, dated 1209 A. D. (Śake 1131). Later in chronology to this is the inscription of 1237 A. D. (Śake 1159) in the temple of Vithoba in Pandharpur itself, where we read that a certain king, called Someśvara, had conquered the kings round about his territory, and had encamped in the year 1237 A. D. (Śake 1159) in a town called "Pandarige" on the banks of the Bhīmarathī, where Pundalīka was being lovingly remembered by people as a great sage. The next inscription is of the date 1273 A.D. (Śake 1195) from that temple itself, which records that in that year the temple of Vitthala was being rebuilt and that during the period from 1273 A.D. to 1277 A.D. (Śake 1195-1199) funds were being collected in order to raise a suitable temple to the God. In this inscription, the names of those who contributed to the rebuilding of the temple are mentioned, most promi-nently among whom are the names of Hemādapant, the minister of Ramdevrao Jādhava, and of the King Ramdevrao Jādhava himself, who visited the temple in 1276 A.D. (Śake 1198), and gave the temple a very large subsidy. It would seem therefore that the Sāmpradāya of Vitthala at Pandharpur was prevalent even before the time of Jñānadeva and Nāmadeva, and that after Pundalīka the greatest saints in the history of Sāmpradāya were Jñānadeva and Nāmadeva themselves. Pilgrims from all parts of the country flocked to Pandharpur from Gujerath, Karnatak, the Telugu and Tamil Districts, as well as from the Marāthā Province. The Kūtana as a method of spreading the gospel of these saints, seems to have originated in the necessity of making their spiritual ideas clear to the many pilgrims who were flocking to Pandharpur, and it seems, to a certain extent, Jñānadeva himself, and after him Nāmadeva, were the greatest of the early Kīrtana-performers, or singers of the praise of God.

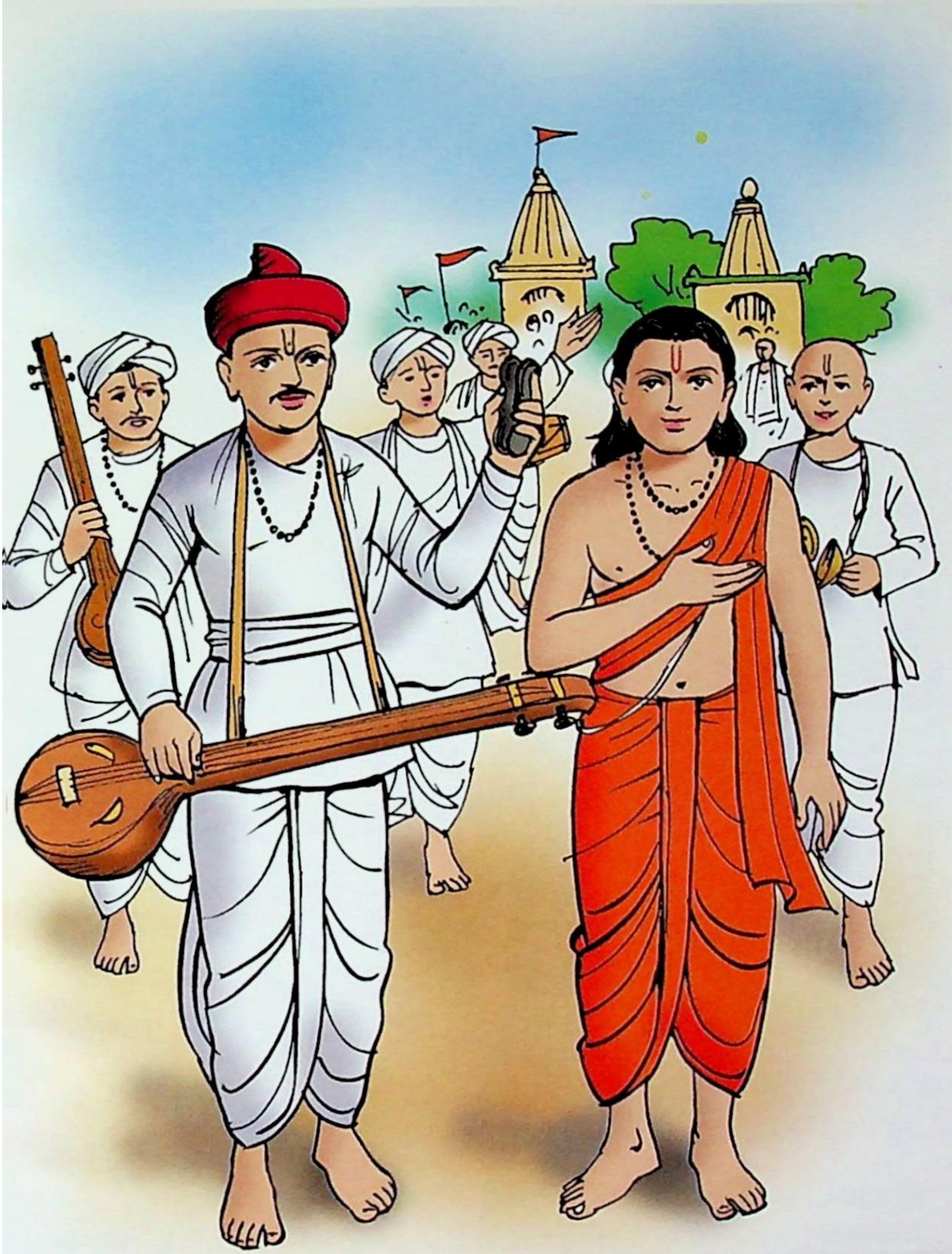
2. Jnanadeva and Namadeva as Contemporaries.

That Jñānadeva and Nāmadeva were contemporaries, that they went together on a pilgrim from Pandharpur, that they were brothers in a spiritual Sāmpradāya, are facts too well-grounded, and not mere myths to be disturbed by sceptical considerations. The fact that there is a difference of language between the Jñāneśvarī and the Abhangas of Nāmadeva is not an argument to prove any difference of time between the two great saints. The originals of Nāmadeva's Abhang are not preserved. They have undergone successive changes, as they were recited and have been handed over from mouth to mouth. All these, facts account for the modernness of Nāmadeva's style. For that very same reason, for the Abhangas of Jñānadeva are separated, for example from the Jñāneśvarī by these critics, would they separate the Abhangas of Nāmadeva in time from the writings of Jñānadeva? But the considerations we have adduced above will convince our readers that there is justification enough for the modernness of Nāmadeva's style. Moreover, the fact must not be lost sight of, that there might be a difference of style from individual to individual. This consideration also will justify us in not separating Nāmadeva from Jñānadeva in time. According to Bhāradvāja's proposition, Jñānadeva, the author of the

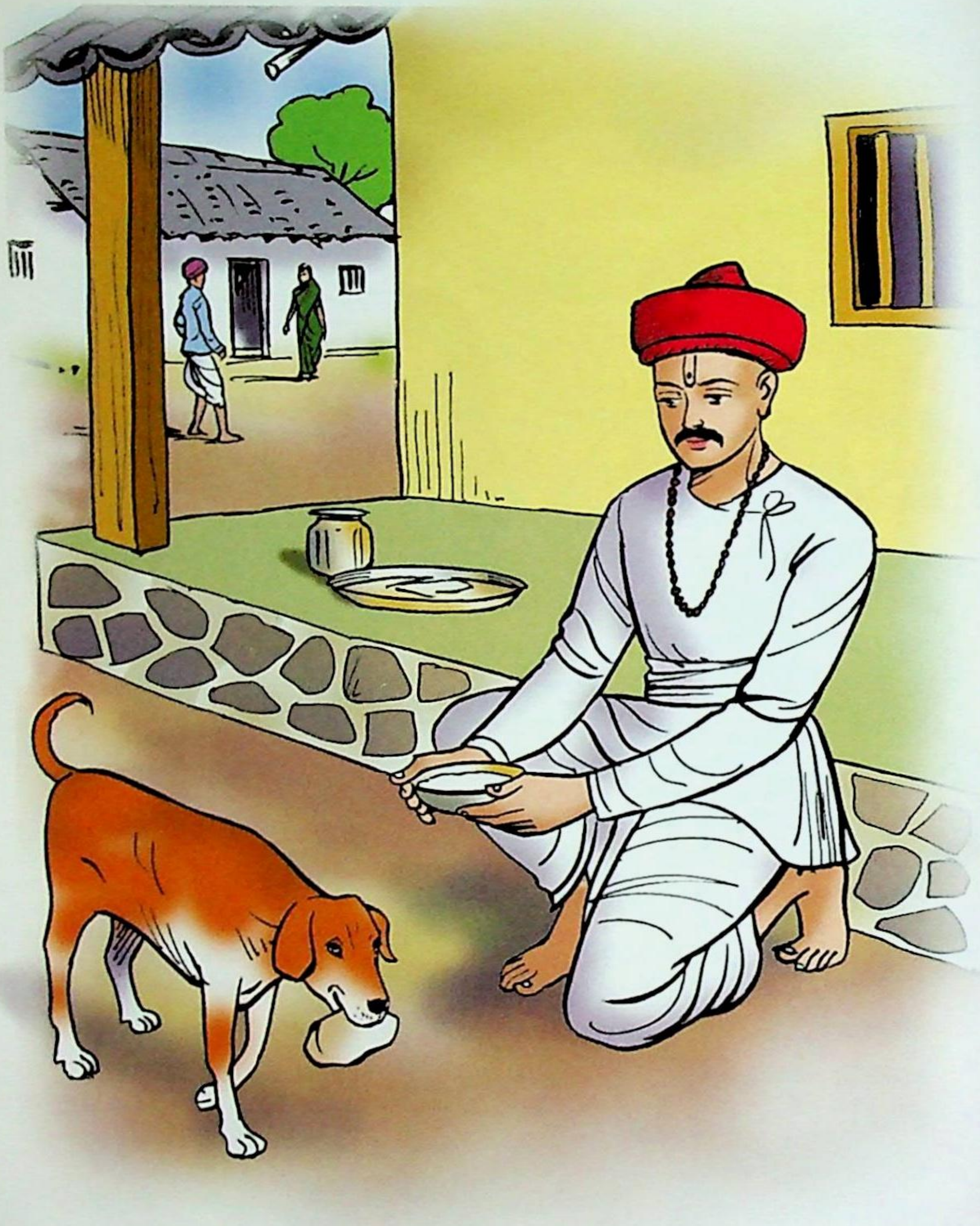
Abhahgas, was contemporaneous with Nāmadeva. But, as we have established in our last Chapter that the Jñānadeva of the Abhahgas is not a different Jñānadeva from the Jñānadeva of the Jñāneśvarī, the supposition that Nāmadeva was a contemporary of the Jñānadeva of the Abhahgas loses all meaning. Nor can Bhāradvāja's argument that the reference in Nāmadeva to the Mahomedan invasions, and the absence of it in the Jñāneśvarī, be an argument for the difference in time between Jñānadeva and Nāmadeva. As we have shown in our introduction to the age of Jñānadeva, Allauddin Khilji invaded the Deccan in 1294 A.D. (Śake 1216), that is to say, about two years before Jñānadeva passed away; while, as we shall see later on, Nāmadeva's death took place in 1350 A.D. (Śake 1272). Thus there is clearly a difference of fifty-four years between the dates of Jñānadeva's and Nāmadeva's passing away. During this half century, it is not impossible that the invasions of the Mahomedans had made great impression upon the minds of the Marāthās; and hence it is no wonder that Nāmadeva refers to these invasions in his Abhangas ; while we can see from the very same fact why Jñānadeva could not have referred to them. The only sense in which we can say that Nāmadeva was later than Jñānadeva is this: not that Nāmadeva was separated from Jñānadeva in time by over a century as some critics would have it, but that even though they were born about the same time, Nāmadeva outlived Jñānadeva by over half a century. It is only in this sense that we may say that Nāmadeva was later than Jñānadeva ; while, the fact that they lived and moved together could be seen not merely from the account of their travels given in the Tīrthāvalī of Nāmadeva which nobody has hitherto dared to regard as mythical, but also from the many references in Nāmadeva to Jñānadeva, as well as from the references in Jñānadeva to Nāmadeva, whom he declares to be verily 'the illumination of the world'.

3. A Sketch of Namadeva's life.

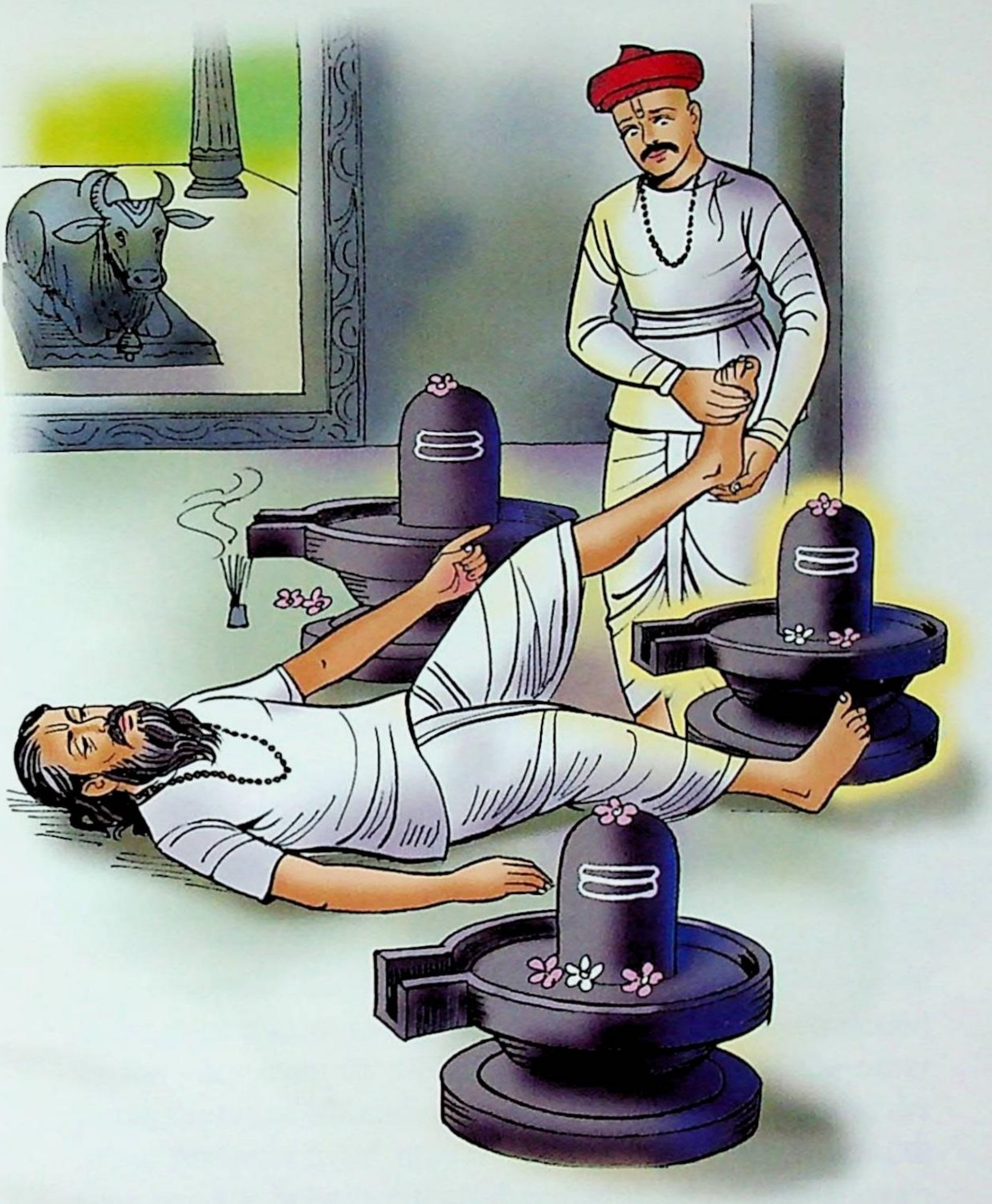
From an Abhanga written by Nāmadeva himself, it seems that Nāmadeva was born in 1270 A. D. (Śake 1192), that is, a few years before Jñānadeva. Nāmadeva tells us that a certain Brahmin, Bābāji by name, had cast his horoscope, foretelling that Nāmadeva would compose a hundred crores of Abhahgas (Abg.1). In another of his Abhahgas, we read that his father Dāmāśeta was a tailor by caste, and lived in Narasingpur. The same Abhanga tells us that Nāmadeva led a very lawless life in the beginning o his career. We are told that he was a marauder, and a way-layer, who once upon a time killed eighty-four horsemen, and when he had gone to visit the temple of Āmvadhyā, as was his usual custom, he saw a woman rebuking her child which was crying because it had nothing to eat; and when Nāmadeva inquired, she told him that she was made a widow, and the child an orphan, on account of her husband being killed among the eighty-four horsemen by a certain way-layer; upon which Nāmadeva's heart was touched to the quick, and he went inside the temple and in the fury of repentance, he struck his neck with a scythe, and let loose streams of blood on the Deity. The worshippers of the temple saw that horrible deed, asked him the reason why he was doing it, and turned him out of the temple. He went to Pandharpur and determined to lead a holy and pious life. Thus it was by the tears that were shed by a woman whom in his lawlessness he had made a widow, that he was suddenly converted from an evil life, and he then determined to lead the life of a saint. He used to visit the temple at Pandharpur and fall prostrate before God. After some years of repentance and devotion to God, he came to realise the nature of God. The story goes that when Jñānadeva, Gorā Kumbhāra, and other saints had once gathered together at Pandharpur, Gorā began to test which of the "pots" that had gathered there were ripe, and which were unbaked ; and he ultimately found that Nāmadeva was entirely an unbaked pot. This story we shall give later in detail in the very words of Nāmadeva. Here we have made a reference to it just to give comple-teness to the life-story of Nāmadeva at this stage. Nāmadeva felt very sorry, and finding that he was the only unbaked pot in the whole assembly of saints, determined to find a Guru through whom he might know the way to spiritual life. He went to Visobā Khechara, some say at Bārsi, while others say at Āmvadhyā, where Nāmadeva was convinced by Visobā Khechara of the Omnipresence of God and was initiated by him into the spiritual life. Thereupon, Nāmadeva became worthy of the company of the Saints at Pandharpur. Many stories are told of the way in which Nāmadeva led a perfectly spiritual life. While he was once eating a piece of bread, a dog appeared before him, and ran away with the piece. Nāmadeva pursued it with a pot of curds, praying that it should partake of the curds also. This story shows how Nāmadeva began to see God in every creature. There are all kinds of miracles told about Nāmadeva, especially while he and Jñānadeva had gone on their famous pilgrimage. Janābāī tells us how once upon a time Nāmadeva by his power saved Pandharpur from the ravages of a great flood. Nāmadeva's house in Pandharpur is still shown. There is still the image of Keśirāja in that house. Before the great image in the temple at Pandharpur,



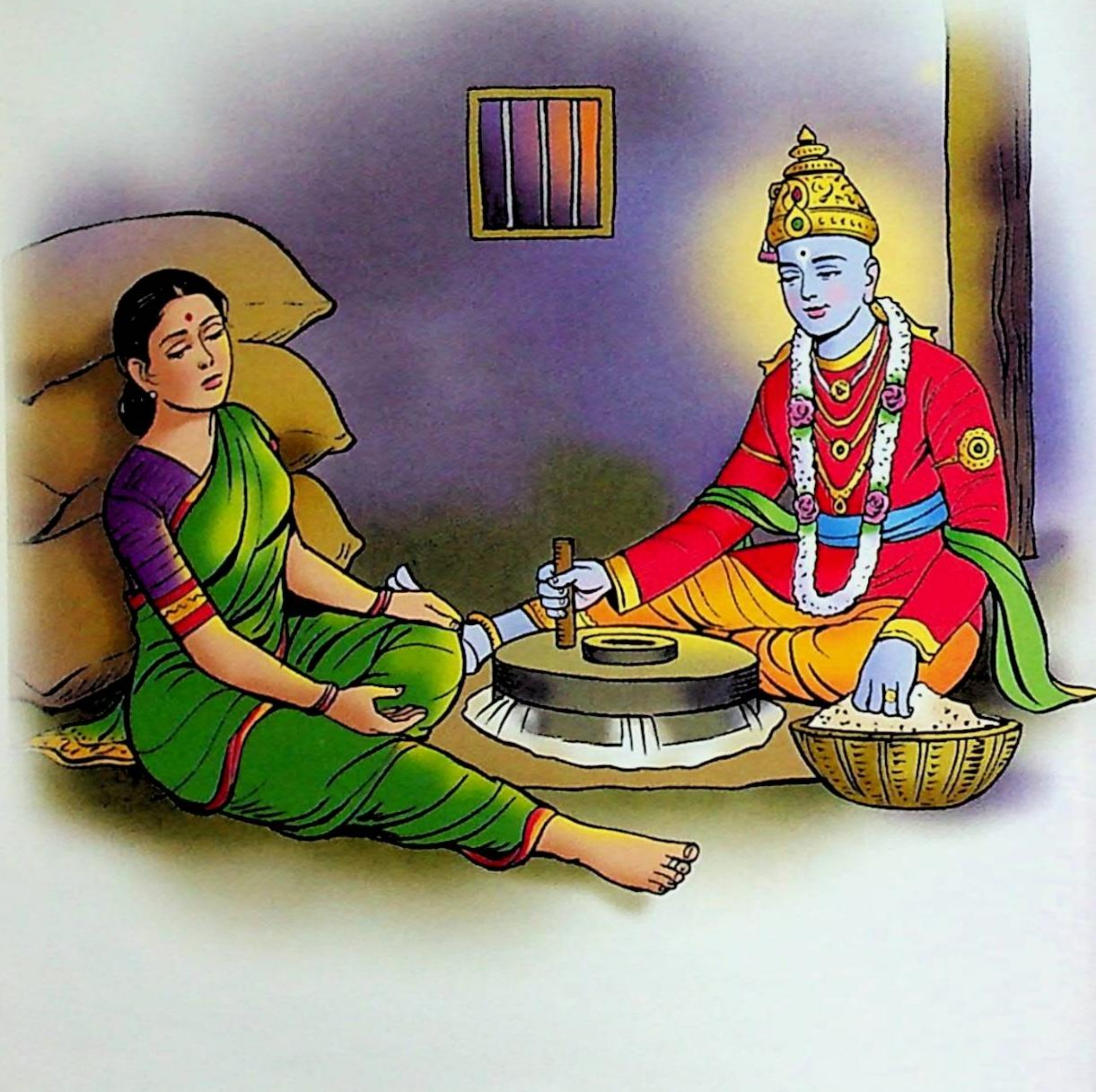
During Namdev and Jnandev's Pilgrimage to Pandharpur.



A hungry dog elopes with the piece of Roti which Namdev was taking his food. Namdev chases the dog with a bowl of curd indicating the presence of divinity among all beings.



Once, Visoba Khechar was sleeping with his legs on a Linga (a symbol of Lord Shankar) in a temple. No sooner Namdev lifted the legs of Visoba Khechar from the Linga & kept aside the Linga appeared again below the legs. This enlightened Namdeva about the all -pervading Divinity and Namdev accepted him as Guru (Master).



Janabai was an ardent devotee of Namdev. She spent her entire life serving Namdev at his home and in the devotion of Lord Vitthal.

Nāmadeva danced in spiritual ecstasy. He was probably the greatest of the early Kīrtana-performers. He developed the Sāmpradāya of Pandharī, as no other single saint ever did. There were a number of other Saints in his time at Pandharpur, and they all formed a happy spiritual company. It seems that Nāmadeva died in 1350 A.D. (Śake 1272), that is, about fifty-four years later than Jñānadeva. The passing away of Jñānadeva must have been a very severe blow to Nāmadeva. Jñānadeva and Nāmadeva represent the intellectual and the emotional sides of spiritual life. According to some, Visobā's spiritual teacher was Sopāna, and according to others Jñānadeva. If the latter be true, then Jñānadeva happens to be the teacher's teacher of Nāmadeva. Nāmadeva is buried at the great door of the temple of Vithoba. Nāmadeva and Chokhāmelā stand face to face before the front door of the temple. The priests in Vithoba's temple say that the bones of the Nāmadeva who was buried at the front door are the bones of a Brahmin Nāmadeva, about whom we shall speak presently, and not of the tailor Nāmadeva. But this does not seem to be established. For, the Brahmin Nāmadeva who was otherwise called Vishnudāsa Nāmā does not seem to be so great a saint as to deserve the honour of being buried in the very front of the temple of Vithoba. On the other hand, the tailor Nāmadeva, who is one of the greatest of the saints that ever lived, may be regarded as rightly deserving that honour. Whether the other members of Nāmadeva's family were alike buried near the front door is questionable. But we can definitely take the "Pāyarī" which is known at present as "Nāmadeva's Pāyarī" before the great door of the temple, as the Samādhi of the great saint.

4. Namadeva and Vishnudasanama.

An authentic collection of Nāmadeva's Abhangas has yet to be made. Indeed this matter is one of insuperable difficulty, inasmuch as the Abhangas of the Tailor Nāmadeva and the Abhangas of the Brahmin Nāmadeva are hopelessly mixed. The only possible criterion of the separation of the Abhangas of the one from those of the other, is that the latter probably invariably calls himself Vishnudāsanāmā. It is evident that the latter, who came after the earlier Nāmadeva by a couple of centuries, had justification for calling his Abhangas as those of Vishnudāsanāmā, to distinguish them from the Abhangas of Nāmadeva. The earlier Nāmadeva, if he ever called himself Vishnud-āsanāmā called himself so, only in the sense that he was a devotee of God. The later Nāmadeva, when he calls himself Vishnudāsanāmā, uses the term as an appellation. There are other criteria also. The criteria of brilliance of imagination, of simplicity of style, the comparative oldness of vocabulary, and such others, must be systematically applied, and some day, we hope, an authentic collection of the great Nāmadeva's Abhangas will be made. We have said that there is a difference of a couple of centuries between the earlier Nāmadeva, who was a tailor, and the later Nāmadeva who was a Brahmin. Mr. Bhave has shown that the date of the later Nāmadeva should be taken as 1578 A.D. (Śake 1500). In any case, his Abhangas cannot command the originality and the spontaneity of the Abhangas of the earlier Nāmadeva. It is probably a confusion of these two Nāmadevas, which lies at the bottom of transferring even the earlier Nāmadeva to about a century or two later, and many critics have fallen a prey to it. As Pandit Pandurangaśarma has shown, the earlier Nāmadeva's exploits are referred to in Narasī Mehtā's "Haramālā", A.D. 1413 (Samvat 1470). This means that Nāmadeva's name must have been a classical one at the time when Narasī Mehtā wrote the work. Moreover, the eighty Abhangas of Nāmadeva in the Granthasaheb of the Sikhs must be attributed to the earlier Nāmadeva. In our account of the teachings of the earlier and the later Nāmadevas, we have tried as best we can to separate their Abhangas by the tests we have referred to; but our conclusions at this stage could only be provisional. It is only when the tests we have referred to have been applied severely, and the Abhangas thus separated into two different groups, that we shall ultimately be able to say that our conclusions are final.

5. Gora, the Potter.

Of the contemporary saints of Nāmadeva, Gorā, the potter, evidently takes the first place. He was born in 1267 A.D. (Śake 1189), three years before Nāmadeva, and about eight years before Jñānadeva. As he was the eldest of the contemporary saints, he was called 'Uncle Gorā'. He lived at Teradhokī. As we have seen, he was given the work of testing the spirituality of Nāmadeva by Jñānadeva and others. He was present at the Jñānadeva-Nāmadeva pilgrimage, and was respe-cted by all his contemporaries. The story goes that he was so filled with God-devotion that he once did not know that he had trampled his child in clay under his feet, while he was dancing in joy. But by God's grace the child was saved.

6. Visoba Khechara.

Visobā Khechara, who is next in importance as being the teacher of Nāmadeva, has been supposed to have lived either at Āmvadhyā or Bārsi. He was called Khechara in contempt by Muktābāī and Jñānadeva, as he did not at first believe in them. But, having later come to know their spiritual greatness, he became their disciple. While Nāmadeva went to meet him, he had placed his feet upon a Lingam of Śiva, and when Nāmadeva rebuked him for having insulted the deity, Visobā asked him to place his feet elsewhere, where also as the story goes, there sprang up a Lingam of Śiva under his feet. This only means that Visobā convinced Nāmadeva of the omnipresence of God. He also accompanied Jñānadeva and Nāmadeva in their pilgrimage. He died at Bārsi on Śrāvana Śuddha Ekādaśī, 1309 A.D. (Śake 1231).

7. Samvata, the Gardener.

The third of the great contemporary saints of Nāmadeva, was Sāmvatā, the gardener of Aranagaon. Aranagaon is a village three miles from Modanimba Station, B. L. Railway, and is under Miraj jurisdiction. His garden and well are shown even to-day. Sāmvatā could see God in everything, before Nāmadeva could. He was also present in the Jñānadeva-Nāmadeva pilgrimage. He died on Āshadha Vadya Chaturdaśī, 1295 A.D. (Śake 1217). His Samādhi is at Aranagaon. This is a very well-built building, much of the expenses of which have been defrayed by the gardener community of Bombay and Poona. One of the Brahmin Bhaktas of Sāmvatā has been buried before him. Aranagaon is worth while a visit.

8. Narahari, the Godsmith.

Narahari, the goldsmith, was at first an inhabitant of

Devagiri, and then he came to Pandharpur. He was a great devotee of Śiva, and could not appreciate Vitthala-Bhakti at first. It seems that on account of the influence exercised by Jñānadeva and others, he came into the Bhāgavata line. A story is also told how he came to recognise the identity of Śiva and Vishnu. He died in 1313 A.D. (Śake 1235).

9. Chokha, the Untouchable.

Chokhā, the untouchable, was a resident of Mangalvedhā. Mangalvedhā is now a Taluka under the State of Sangli and is well worth a visit on account of the many antiquarian relics there. Chokhā was a great devotee of the God of Pandharpur, and being of the outcast community, could only pray to God from outside the temple at Pandharpur. But God Vithoba loved him none the less. He had a son called Karmā, and a sister called Nirmalā. He was also present in the Jñānadeva-Nāmadeva pilgrimage. While he was at work on the parapet at Mangalvedhā, the wall fell down on him, and he died with the other workers under the wall in 1338 A.D. (Śake 1260). The devotees of Pandharpur wanted to bring the bones of Chokhā to Pandharpur. But they could not know how to distinguish his bones from those of others. So they prayed to Nāmadeva to tell them how they could separate the bones of Chokhā from those of the rest. Nāmadeva told them to pick up only those bones from the ruins, from which was audible the name of Vitthala, and the story goes that the bones were thus separated and brought to Pandharpur. This story only shows that devotion to the Name of God had penetrated to the very bones of Chokhā, and that even though his physical body was dead, the inert matter of which his body was composed could still be a witness to the presence of God. Chokhā's bones were carried to Pandharpur, and can even to-day be seen placed in a Samādhi before the front-door of the temple just opposite to the place where Nāmadeva's bones have been placed.

10. Janabai, the Maid.

Janābāī, who is the next in the order of seniority, was a maid-servant of Nāmadeva. While only girl, she was handed over to the care of Dāmāśeta by her father, and she spent her life in doing menial service at Nāmadeva's house, and in singing the praises of God. She was the greatest of the female disciples of Nāmadeva, as Venubāī and Akkā were the greatest of the female disciples of Rāmadāsa. As regards her place among the female saints of Mahārāshtra, we may say that she was the greatest of them, barring only the sister of Jñānadeva, namely, Muktābāī. Her Abhangas show a fervour, in which she is certainly influenced by the great devotion of Nāmadeva. We also owe to her certain Abhangas which enable us to discuss the historical position of Nāmadeva and other saints.

11. Sena, the Barber.

Senā, the barber, was in the service of the king of Bedar. He was so given to God-devotion, that he once gave no heed to the king's invitation for shaving, while he was engaged in meditation. He lived about the year 1448 A.D. (Śake 1370), and could say that he could show God to others as in a mirror.

12. Kanhopatra, the Dancing Girl.

Kanhopātrā, was a very beautiful daughter of Syāmā, a dancing woman in Mangalvedhā. She said that she would marry only him whose beauty equalled hers. She found the beauty only in the God of Pandharpur, and remained there as Vithoba's worshipper. The king of Bedar once sent for the beautiful Kanhopātrā. She implored God to save her, but when the messengers insisted upon taking her to the king of Bedar, she decided to give up the ghost rather than go to the king of Bedar. The dead body was thus laid at the feet of God, and she was buried to the south of the temple. A strange tree has sprung up on the place where she was buried. This tree still remains, and is worshipped by all pilgrims. She seems to have lived about 1468 A.D. (Śake 1390). With this biographical introduction to Nāmadeva and his contem-porary saints, let us now turn to a survey of their teachings as gathered from their various writings.

CHAPTER II.

The Abhangas of Namadeva and Contemporary Saints.

1. The Heart-rendings of Namadeva.

The great characteristic of the Abhangas of Nāmadeva is the manner in which we see always how his heart pants for God. Like Tukārāma at a later date, Nāmadeva also experienced much heart-rending for the attainment of God. This state has been characterised in Western Mysticism as "the Dark Night of the Soul". We will see how, in the case of Nāmadeva, this state was experienced partially. Later, we will see how Tukārāma experienced it fully. We may say that Nāma-deva in this respect approaches Tukārāma more than Jñānadeva. "As a bee's heart might be set upon the fragrance of a flower, or as a fly might take resort to honey, similarly does my mind cling to God", says Nāmadeva (Abg. 11). "I am called lord-less, lordless; but Thou art called the Lord. I am called fallen, fallen; but Thou art called the reliever of the fallen. Poor, poor, do they call me; but they call Thee the reliever of the poor in heart. They call me afflicted, afflicted ; but they call Tine one who wouldst relieve people of their afflictions. If Thou wert not to listen to me, says Nāmadeva, would it not be a matter of shame ? " (Abg. 13). In this world, there is nobody else except Thee for whom I care, or who cares for me (Abg. 14). This little Samsāra has had the power to conceal Thee, who art all-encompassing. Thou obligest me to cling to Samsāra, and thus bringest to me the treachery of my Lord. I have now come to know Thy wiles, says Nāmadeva ; I shall take any measures I will (Abg. 16). If the moon were to satisfy the desires of the Chakora, would her light be diminished for the obligation ? (Abg. 18.) If a cloud were to quench the thirst of a Chātaka bird, would his greatness be thereby lessened ? (Abg. 19.) Thou art my bird, I am Thy young one. Thou art my deer, I am Thy cub (Abg. 20). If the mother-bird moves out of her nest in the morning, its young ones keep looking out for her. Similarly, does my mind look out for Thee, my Lord (Abg. 22). If a child falls into a fire, its mother comes to its succour with an overpowered heart. If a fire envelopes a forest, the mother-deer is afflicted for its young one. In a similar way, says Nāmadeva, Thou must care for me (Abg. 23). When I consider that, at the end of my life, I shall have to depart alone ; when I think that my mother who bore me in her womb for nine months will cruelly stand aside ; when I find the futility of the affection which sisters and brothers bear towards me ; when I find that children and wife shall stay away when my body will be burning upon the funeral pile ; when I contemplate how friends and relatives shall leave me in the cemetery and walk away ; I then begin to shed tears ; my throat chokes : I find that darkness reigns everywhere; my only resort is Thy feet, says Nāmadeva (Abg. 24). I contemplate an immolation of myself at Thy feet. The river of desire, however, carries me away. I cannot be rescued from the river by any other swimmer except Thee ; hence, throw Thyself into the river with Thy apparel to rescue me. The necklace of the nine jewels of devotion has been submerged in the river. The gourds of courage and discrimination have been broken to pieces. Faith, the rope by which one might swim out, has been sundered in twain. The great fish plying into the waters, namely Anger, is intent upon carrying me to the bottom of the river. Thou shouldst swiftly leap into the river to take me out, says Nāmadeva (Abg. 28). With tears in the eyes and with out-stretched hands, Nāmadeva is looking out for his Lord (Abg. 30). Shameless as he is, with his life-breath centred in his throat, he has been thinking about Thee night and day (Abg. 31). The three fires of the physical, metaphysical, and accidental evils, have been burning fiercely before me. When wouldst Thou rain from heaven, O Cloud of Mercy ? I have been caught in the flames of grief and infatuation. The wild conflagration of anxiety has spread all round. I am going to the bottom of the river and coming up again. Unless Thou, O Cloud of Mercy, run to my succour, my life-breath will depart from me (Abg. 32). Thou shouldst not consider my merit. I am an ocean of sin incarnate. From top to toe, I have committed sins innumerable (Abg. 35). Do you think that I shall grow weary, and go away from your presence, feeling that you would not come ? The rope of my life I shall bind to Thy feet, and shall bring Thee to me at pleasure. It is best therefore that Thou shouldst see me of Thy own accord (Abg. 36). I shall spread the meshes of my love and catch Thee alive. I shall make my heart a prison for Thee, and shall intern Thee inside. I shall beat Thee with the voice of Self-identity, and Thou shalt surely ask for compassion (Abg. 37). Thy generosity has been falsely praised. Thou givest only when Thou hast taken away (Abg. 40). The great Bali threw his body at Thy feet, and then Thou hadst compassion on him. Thy devotees have sacrificed their lives for Thy sake. Thou shouldst not forget that it is these devotees that have brought name to Thee (Abg. 41). If a king leaves away his wife, does she not rule over the world ? If the son of an Emperor has committed a fault, is it possible that any other man might bring him to book ? We may possess as many faults as we like, and yet our faults are in the Lord (Abg. 44). We shall speak such words as will make God nod in joy. Love shall fill every part of our body, and our mouth will utter the name of God. We shall dance in the performance of Kīrtana, shall light the lamp of knowledge in this world, and live in a place which is beyond the highest. All power has come to me, says Nāmadeva, on account of the gift of my Spiritual Teacher (Abg. 47).

2. Namadeva's Insistence on the Name of God.

Among all the Saints of Mahārāshtra, we find a perpetual insistence on the significance and efficacy of the Name of God; and of all these saints, we may say, Nāmadeva's insistence upon the Name is the strongest. "If I were to leave meditation on Thy feet even for a while, "says Nāmadeva, "my life-breath will vanish instantly. If there were a cessation to the utterance of the name of God in my mouth, my tongue will split a thousand-fold. If my eyes were not to see Thy beautiful form, they would come out forcibly from their sockets" (Abg. 49). Through mystical experience, through devotion, through deceipt, through the torments of Samsāra, let the name of God always dance upon the tongue (Abg. 51). There is neither time nor season for the meditation of God. There is neither a high caste nor low in His meditation. He who is the Ocean of love and pity shall come to the succour of all (Abg. 54). The great Śiva was tormented by the poison called Hālāhala, and yet his body became cool when he meditated on God. In the eighteen Purānas, says Nāmadeva, the only remedy narrated is the utterance of the Name of God (Abg. 55). The Pāndavas, even though they were enveloped in a house of fire, were saved because they meditated on the name of God. The cow-herds could not be burnt by fire, because they held God in their hearts. Hanumān could not be burnt by fire, because he meditated on the name of Rāma. Fire had no power over Prahlāda, because he constantly uttered the name of God. Sītā was not burnt by fire, because she set her heart upon Raghunātha. The home of Bibhīshana was saved in the holocaust at Lankā, says Nāmadeva, because he meditated on the name of God (Abg. 59). The coverings of untruth, which envelop a man's words, shall never depart except through a meditation on God (Abg. 61). The Name of God is the Form of God, and the Form of God is the Name of God. There is no other remedy except the Name of God, says Nāmadeva, and anybody who says there is another is a fool (Abg. 64). God may remain concealed ; but He cannot conceal His name. When we have once uttered His name, He cannot escape from us (Abg. 66). Let the body live or depart, fix your mind upon God. I shall never leave Thy feet, says Nāmadeva, shall keep Thy Name in my mouth, and set my heart aflame with Thy love. I only implore Thee, says Nāmadeva, that Thou shouldst fulfil my resolve (Abg. 67). To be in Samsāra is even a pleasure, when the mind is once set upon God (Abg. 68). Poor Brahmins do not know the secret of realisation. God can be attained by meditation on His name only. I implore the young and the old, says Nāmadeva, to cling fast to the Name of God. In all your religious ceremonies, you should think only of God, and nothing else (Abg. 72). They paint the pictures of the sun or the moon, but they cannot paint the picture of light. They can put on the apparel of a Samnyāsin, but they cannot imitate his dispassion. They may perform a Kīrtana, says Nāmadeva, but they will miss the nature of God-love (Abg. 75). With a Vinā in my hand, and with the name of God in my mouth, I shall stand up in the temple of God. I shall renounce all food and water, and shall think of nothing but God. I shall forget my mother, or father, or wife, or children. I shall lose all bodily consciousness, and merge it in the Name of God, says Nāmadeva (Abg. 77). If, in such a condition, Death comes to devour me, I shall sing and dance in joy. My only wish is, says Nāmadeva, that I should serve Thee from life to life (Abg. 80).

3. Reflections on Social Matters.

We have said in a foregoing chapter that one of the uses to which the Abhanga was put was for reflection on social matters, as it was also for the purpose of personal devotion. Nāmadeva very often makes use of his Abhahgas to discourse on social topics. He tells us that it is impossible that the pursuit of God can be coupled with a life of Samsāra. If it had been possible, he tells us, for a man to find God while he was pursuing Samsāra, then Sanaka and others would not have grown mad after God. If it had been possible for him to see God while carrying on the duties of a house-holder, the great Śuka would not have gone to the forest to seek God. Had it been possible for people to find God in their homes, they would not have left them to find out God. Nāmadeva says that he has left away all these things, and is approaching God in utter submission (Abg. 83). Then, again, he tells us that our one goal should be the vision of God, whatever pursuit we might be undertaking, children send a kite into the sky with a rope in their hands ; but their attention is upon the kite, and not upon the rope. A woman from Gujerath goes with pitcher piled upon pitcher, moving her hands freely, but her attention is riveted upon the pitchers. An unchaste woman has her heart always set upon her lover. A thief sets his heart upon other people's gold. A covetous man has his attention ever directed towards his treasure. We may carry on any pursuit, says Nāmadeva, provided we always think of God (Abg. 85). Then, again, he tells us that it is the consideration of the belly which is paramount with all people in the world. The belly, which is scarcely larger than a span's length, is yet so powerful, says Nāmadeva. It prevents us from treading in the way of the saints. The belly is our mother, the belly our father; the belly our sister and brother. Nāmadeva looks at his belly and asks how long it is going to have sway over him (Abg. 87). We should always think of death, says Nāniadeva, in whatever pursuit we might be engaged. As when a thief is being carried to the hanging place, death is approaching him at evey step ; as when a man is plying his axe at the root of a tree, its life is diminishing every moment; similarly, whatever we may he doing, we must suppose that death is always approaching us (Abg. 90). Moreover, Nāmadeva tells us that we should be supremely indifferent to dualities like good and evil. All objects of sense should be as indifferent to us, as either a serpent or a beautiful maiden is to a man who has gone to sleep. We should regard dung and gold, or a jewel or a stone, as of equal value. Let the sky come and envelop us, or let cinders be poured on our head, we should not allow our life in Ātman to be disturbed. You may praise us or censure us, says Nāmadeva, we shall always live in the joy of God (Abg. 91). People forget, says Nāmadeva, that their bodily miseries are due to the sins they have committed. Nobody should expect a sweet fruit when he sows a sour seed. From an Arka tree, plantains shall never come out. A pestle can never be bent to the form of an arrow. One may pound stones as he pleases, but never will any juice come out of it. We should not grow wroth with our fate, says Nāmadeva: we should ask ourselves what we have done (Abg. 92). Then, again, Nāmadeva tells us that to pin our faith upon stone-images is a vain pursuit. A stone god and an illusory devotee can never satisfy each other. Such gods have been broken to pieces by the Turks, or have been flung in water, and yet they do not cry. Show me not such deities of iron, says Nāmadeva to God (Abg. 94). Is it not wonderful, asks Nāmadeva, that people should give up the animate, and hold the inanimate as superior to it ? They pluck a living Tulsi plant, and with it worship an inanimate stone. They pluck the leaves of Bela, and throw them in numbers upon a lingam of Śiva. They kill a living ram, and say they are performing the Soma sacrifice. They besmear a stone with red lead, and children and women fall prostrate before it. The performance of an Agnihotra means death to the Kuśa grass and the Pimpala sticks. People worship a serpent made of mud, but they take cudgels against a living serpent. All these pursuits are vain, says Nāmadeva : the only pursuit of value is the utterance of the Name of God (Abg. 95). Then, Nāmadeva tells us that a beautiful woman is the cause of sorrow, and an ugly woman the cause of happiness ; for the one incites love, while the other does not (Abgs. 100, 101). Contact with other women, says Nāmadeva, is the sure cause of ruin. In that way did Rāvana die. In that way was Bhasmāsura reduced to ashes. In that way the Moon became consumptive. In that way, Indra had his body covered with a thousand holes (Abg. 102). It is only then, says Nāmadeva, that we may talk of dispassionateness, when we are not attacked by the arrows of a woman's eyes. It is only then, says Nāmadeva, that we may talk of Self-knowledge, when anger and love do not spring up within us. It is only then, says Nāmadeva, that we may talk of absence of egoism. when our self is not censured (Abg, 103). Finally. Nāmadeva tells us how it is difficult to find the following pairs together : gold and fragrance, diamond and softness, a login and purity ; a talking god, a moving wish-tree, and a milch-elephant; a rich man with compassion, a tiger with mercy, and fire with coolness ; a beautiful woman who is chaste, a hearer who is attentive, and a preacher who knows; a Kshatriya who is grave, a sandal tree covered with flowers, and a handsome man who is virtuous. Nāma-deva tells us that it is impossible to find such pairs in life (Abg. 106).

4. The Characteristics of Saints.

The characteristics of the Saints, says Nāmadeva, are manifold. Him alone we may call a saint, says Nāmadeva, who sees God in all beings : who looks upon gold as a clod of earth ; who looks upon a jewel as a mere stone; who has driven out of his heart anger and passion; who harbours peace and forgiveness in his mind; whose speech is given merely to the utterance of God's name (Abg. 108). As trees do not know honour and dishonour, as they are equal to those who worship them and those who cut them, similarly, the saints in their supreme courage look upon honour and dishonour alike (Abg. 109). That is the supreme Law of Saint-hood, says Nāmadeva, which regards as necessary a perfect belief in the efficacy of God's name, and which requires us to eradicate all our other desires (Abg. 110). He alone, we may say, has reached ecstasy, who looks upon honour and dishonour alike. He alone is the beloved of God, who looks upon friend and enemy alike. He alone is the king of Yogins who looks upon gold and a portion of mud with equal eye. Such a one is a great purifying power, and makes all the three worlds pure by his presence (Abg. 111). The very gods worship the water of his feet. A mere remembrance of him puts an end to all sin (Abg. 114).

Nāmadeva tells us that a Saint is a spiritual washerman. He applies the soap of illumination, washes on the slab of tranquillity, purifies in the river of knowledge, and takes away the spots of sin (Abg. 115). Fie upon that place, says Nāmadeva, where there is no company of the saints. Fie upon that wealth and progeny, which is not given to the worship of the saints. Fie upon that thought and life, where in there is no worship of God. Fie upon that song, and fie upon that learning, which is not given to the name of God. Fie upon that life which does not make God its sole aim (Abg. 120). There is one way, says Nāmadeva, to reach God, namely, that we should go and take resort with the saints ; for when we have wors-hipped the saints, we shall certainly see God. God always serves His saints, and holds aloft His yellow garment to protect His devotees from sun (Abg. 121). If we cling to the feet of the saints, says Nāmadeva, we shall be relieved of all suffering. If we serve at their door, we shall be relieved of all infatuation. If we partake of their "prasāda", our life-span shall increase. The saints are an ocean of mercy, says Nāmadeva, and they bestow upon us knowledge, devotion, and love (Abg. 122). Those who have seen God, says Nāmadeva, lose all sense of false shame. For them exist no duties of caste and colour. They are forever filled with the joy of unitive life. We should ask of only one favour from God ; namely, that we should be the pollen on the feet of such saints (Abg. 124). He alone is a Saint, says Nāmadeva, who is able to show God. How fortunate am I, he exclaims, that I have been able to see Him in the company of such Saints (Abg. 125)! Without the favour of these Saints, the secret of spiritual life does not reach our hands. The names of God are various; but unless the saints confer favour upon us, we shall not know how to meditate on the name of God (Abg.

127). We can take hold of a ray of light and walk thereon to heaven ; but we cannot know the full significance of the company of the saints. We can go to the nether world and cross the highest ocean ; but we cannot know the value of the company of the saints (Abg. 128). A Chātaka bird shall not ask for all kinds of water ; the waters on the surface of the earth have no value for it. A Cuckoo shall not sing at all times; it will sing only when the spring sets in. A Peacock shall not dance before anybody and everybody ; it is only when the rain-cloud is rumbling, that it will begin to dance. The Eagle can say that it shall serve nobody except God ; similarly, Nāmadeva implores God not to make him dependent upon anybody except Him (Abg. 130). Finally, says Nāmadeva, there have been various types of men who have played the game of spiritual life. Is it not wonderful that where there was nothing, the form of God began to take shape ? That which was formless in a while became formful. One Brahmin child ran away from the game to hide itself for twelve years in a forest. A six-faced boy took shelter in a mountain. A four-faced youth called Nārāyana was a stalwart player. Hanumān was a wise man among these stalwart players, for he did not give himself up to the life of sex. One Gopāla, born in the family of the Yādavas, played his game in manifold ways : ultimately he killed all, threw away the sport, and himself went away. Myriads of such players have there been, says Nāmadeva (Abg. 134); but we should play the game which would suit us best.

5. The Spiritual Experience of Namadeva.

Nāmadeva supposes that the faculty of God-realisation is a God-given gift. A cow gives birth to a calf in a forest: who sends the calf, asks Nāmadeva, to the udders of the cow ? Who teaches the young one of a serpent the art of biting ? A Mogarā, flower stands of itself at the top of the creeper : who teaches it to be fragrant? Even if we manure a bitter gourd-creeper with sugar and milk, it makes the fruits of the gourd more bitter still. A sugar-cane shall never leave its sweetness, if it is cut to pieces, or even if it is swallowed. Similarly, says Nāmadeva, the faculty of realising God is a native faculty, and by that alone will one be able to realise God (Abg. 135). When we have once seen God, it matters little to what place we go. As soon as we remember God, God shall be near us (Abg. 137), We shall forget our hunger and thirst in the pleasure of God's Name. God, who is the source of immortality, is in the heart of Nāmadeva, and Nāmadeva therefore enjoys continued beatification (Abg. 139). There is only one favour that we should ask of God: that we should always think of Him in our heart; that we should always utter His name by our mouth; that we should always see Him with our eyes; that our hands should worship only Him ; that our head be placed always at His feet; that our ears should only hear of God's exploits; that He should show Himself always to our right and to our left, before and after, and at the end of our life. We should ask God of no other favour except this (Abg. 140). As Nāmadeva began to see God, he found Him in all corners, and in all directions (Abg. 141). God's form can be seen even by a blind man, and a dumb man can communicate even in a deaf man's ears the knowledge of God. An ant shall devour the whole universe by its mouth, says Nāmadeva. Only we shall have to verify all these things in our own experience (Abg. 142). When the Unstruck Sound springs out of the thousand-petalled lotus and when God's name is uttered, sins shall depart and hide themselves in a cavern. Keep yourself awake in the meditation on God. Your sins will depart at the utterance of

God's name, and God will give you a secure lodgment in His abode (Abg. 143). In another place, also, Nāmadeva speaks of sins being destroyed by God's name. A single utterance of the name of God creates panic among sins. As soon as God's name is uttered, the divine recorder ceases to record. God Himself comes forth to receive His devotee with materials of worship. If this were to turn out false, says Nāmadeva, then may his head be cut off from his body (Abg. 144). Indeed, Nāmadeva tells us how God is filled with happiness at the singing of His praise. As we sit down and sing the praise of God, God stands before us. As in devotion we stand up and call on the name of God, God dances before us. God indeed loves his Kīrtana so much that He forth with comes to the succour of His devotees in the midst of difficulties (Abg. 145). We have experienced joy, says Nāmadeva, a thousand-fold of what we have witnessed in the Divali holidays. There has been a waving of lights in every house, and we have seen God Vitthala with our eyes. His presence has filled us with joy. Utter now the name of God. As the Lord of Nāmadeva came, the very gods were filled with delight (Abg. 146). Nāmadeva in one place describes his experience when he saw God. Light as brilliant as that of a thousand Suns shone forth at once from the heavens. The saints told Nāmadeva that God was coming. God indeed did come to Nāmadeva as a cow goes to its calf. All the ten quarters were filled by the inroads of the Eagle. A garland of flowers was released from the neck of God, and came to the earth. God's disc moved with Him in order to protect His devotee. God lifted up Nāmadeva with both of His hands, and clasped him to His bosom (Abg. 147). He alone, says Nāmadeva, can be awake who has a determined faith in the words of his teacher. What lamp can we light in order to see our Self?

He, who gives light to the sun and the moon, cannot Himself be seen by any other light. There is neither east nor west in Him; neither north nor south. As an ocean at the time of the Great End might fill the universe, similarly, God fills the universe for one who has experienced Him (Abg. 148). And as such as one goes to the sleep of ecstasy, the twelve and sixteen damsels wave the fans before him. The devotee keeps awake in Self-illumination. Trumpets sound forth. Untold varieties of unstruck sound emerge. There is then neither sleep nor dream. The very Sun and the Moon set before that Illumination (Abg. 149). It is only God who can know the love of His devotee in this manner. He always does reside with His devotee. Nāmadeva tells us that he was so filled with God-experience, that he thought that he was God, and that God was himself (Abg. 150).

6. The Teachings of Gora.

Gorā, the potter, who tested the spirituality of the Saints at the time of Jñānadeva and Nāmadeva, found, it is well known, that Nāmadeva was an unbaked pot. But when Nāmadeva came to know the real secret of spiritual life, Gorā Kumbhāra was satisfied, and told him that thenceforth there was no distinction between him and Nāmadeva. He told Nāmadeva that his own Form had been fixed in his eye, and that all his realisation was centred in the pupil of his eyes (Abg. 1). Gorā also tells us that as he began to look at the sky, he felt as if happiness had gone to meet happiness (Abg. 2). He tells us furthermore that he heard the unstruck sound, and that it was proclaiming the voice of victory. The very Vedas describe the nature of God as neither this nor that, and stand motionless before this perpetual sound. Gorā, the potter, advises Nāmadeva to continually partake of this ambrosial juice of ecstasy (Abg. 3).

The Potter also tells us that in the contemplation of God, he felt as if he had gone mad. He tells us how he had lost all sense of body. By the primeval form of God having taken possession of him, he felt as if he was possessed by a spirit. Henceforth, it was impossible for him to be besmeared with the mud of action, or even with virtue or sin. He lived, he tells us, as one who was emancipated even during life - a Jīvanmukta (Abg. 4). We also know from Gorā that his mind became mute, and that the bliss of experience transcended all bounds. The eyes, unable to see their object, turned upon themselves, and remained motionless. Gorā tells us that one can enjoy the bliss of experience only in mystic silence (Abg. 5). Just as a dumb man cannot express the sweetness of the sugar he is eating, similarly, by our bliss we enjoy bliss, and in that way attain to emancipation even during life. Finally, he warns us not to let the world know of this state. They do not deserve, says Gorā, to be taught the secret of spiritual life (Abg. 6).

7. The Teaching of Visoba.

Visobā, the teacher of Nāmadeva, tells Nāmadeva, that if he boasts that he has seen God, it is merely false knowledge. It would not be possible for any one to meet God until one's egoism is at an end (Abg. 1). Our bliss is with ourselves; it does not lie in any external object. If we possess merely discrimination and dispassion, the way is open for us to know God (Abg. 2). By the contemplation of God, mountains of sins shall be reduced to ashes. By the contemplation of God, the evils of Samsāra shall come to an end. Visobā advises Nāmadeva that he should consider himself fortunate if he obtains the clue to this spiritual pathway (Abg. 3). Finally, we learn from Khechara that for him all land and water, all stones and trees, beings from the very ant to the highest Being, seemed to have been filled with God. The whole world is God, says Khechara to Nāmadeva. He uttered these words in Nāmadeva's ears, placed his hand upon the head of Nāmadeva, relieved him from the duality of existence, and brought him to oneness with himself. Visobā, who was mad with joy, tells us how it was from Jñānadeva that he had himself received spiritual illumination, and how he communi-cated the secret of his spiritual life to Nāmadeva (Abg. 4).

8. The Teachings of Samvata.

Sāmvatā, the gardener, was so filled with the presence of God that he found Him all-pervading in the garden where he was working all his life. Garlic, Chilly, and Onion are all my God. The water-bag, the rope, and the well are all enveloped by my God. Sāmvatā is cultivating a garden and has placed his head on the feet of Vitthala. The one supplication that he makes to God is that He should relieve him of Samsāra. The only thing he asks of God, says Sāmvatā, is that He should bereave him of all his progeny (Abg. 1). Very well it was, that I was born in a low caste, and very well it is that I have not attained to greatness. Had I been born a Brāhmana, I would have given myself over to rituals and ceremonies. Placed as I am, I have neither ablutions to make, nor Sandhyā to perform. Born in a low caste, I can only ask for Thy compassion, says Sāmvatā (Abg. 2). Sāmvatā furthermore tells us that we should behave alike in pleasure and sorrow. One day we may ride an elephant, or move through a palanquin; another, we may walk barefooted. One day there may be no corn at home to live upon ; another, wealth may be so plentiful that one may not know where to preserve it. One day the God of Death may come and we may go to the cemetery ; another, our spiritual teacher might take compassion on us, and the Father of Sāmvatā may show Himself to him (Abg. 4). Sāmvatā also tells us as to how his eyes had once been full-blown, and his hands out-stretched, and how his heart was full of humility. At that time, Jñānadeva and Nāmadeva were passing by his garden. But God went inside the garden, placed His hand upon the head of Sāmvatā, brought him to his senses, and with His four hands embraced him. At that time, Sāmvatā requested God to sit by him, so that he might worship Him (Abg. 5). Finally, he has as much belief in the efficacy of the Name as the other Saints. He tells us that by the power of God's name, one may bid good-bye to all feeling of fear, and deal a blow on the head of Death. By the power of God's name, one can bring God from heaven to earth, and sing and dance in His praise. Sāmvatā thus implores all people to follow the path of Bhakti: for God is surely attained by Bhakti, says Sāmvatā (Abg. 6).

9. The Teachings of Narahari.

Narahari, the goldsmith, is so convinced about the unreality of the world that he regards it as merely a picture drawn upon a wall. As children build houses of stone and then throw them down, similarly, do people engage themselves in worldly life, and then take leave of it (Abg. 1). He tells us that his waywardness was controlled only by his Guru. As an elephant may be controlled by an Ankuśa, as a terrible tiger may be pent up within a cage as the poison of a serpent can be controlled by means of a Mantra or the root of a tree, similarly, Narahari was brought under control by Gaibinātha (Abg. 2). The unstruck sound is forever sounding in my ears, and my mind has been captivated by it. By means of the unstruck sound, think always upon God, and meditate upon Him in your heart. That will endow you with true love of God, and show you His pathway, as it did Narahari (Abg. 4). Finally, we learn from Narahari how he carried on his business of a goldsmith even in his spiritual life. Narahari calls himself a goldsmith who deals in the name of God. He makes his body the melting vessel of the soul, which is the gold therein. In the matrix of the three Gunas, he pours the juice of God. Hammer in hand, he breaks to pieces anger and passion. With the scissors of discrimination, he cuts away the golden leaf of the name of God. With the balance of illumination, he weighs the name of God. He bears the sack of gold on his shoulders, and curries it to the other end of the stream. Narahari, the goldsmith, who is a devotee of God, gives himself night and day to the contemplation of God's name (Abg. 5).

10. The Teachings of Chokha.

Chokhā, the untouchable, tells God that people say to him, "get away, get away". How, then, would it be possible for him to meet Him (Abg. 1) ? He implores God to have compassion on him, and to come to him at no slow pace. The worshippers of the temple beat me for no fault of mine. They asked me how it was that I came by the garland on the bosom of the Deity. They abused me and said, that I had polluted God. I am verily a dog at Thy door, says Chokhā ; send me not away to another man's door (Abg. 2). Chokhā is convinced that the real Pandharī is his own body, that his soul is the deity Vitthala therein. Tranquillity plays the part of Rukminī, says Chokhā. Contemplating God in this fashion, he says, he clings to the feet of God (Abg. 3). He tells us that a sugar-cane may be crooked, and yet its juice is not crooked. A bow may be carved, am yet the arrow is not curved. A river may have windings, and yet the water has no windings. Chokhā may be untouchable, but his heart is not untouchable (Abg. 4). He tells us, furthermore, that if God were to endow him with a son, he should endow him with one who would become a saint. If God were to endow him with a daughter, she should be like either Mirābāī or Muktābāī. If it would not please God to give him offspring in this manner, it would be much better that He should take all offspring from him (Abg. 5). Chokhā tells us that while we are engaged in the Name of God, we need have no cause for fear, or anxiety. The most wicked persons on the earth should come to this place to get themselves purified, says Chokhā, and sounds his drum (Abg. 6). Chokhā and his wife were sure of the presence of God within their house. Chokhā tells us that God had come to his house to partake of dinner with him. He spreads before Him various kinds of sweet dishes, and requests Him to take His meals with him (Abg. 7). The wife of Chokhā tells God that even though the food that she gives Him is not worthy of Him, yet He may be gracious enough to partake of it to His heart's content. She asks God whether He did not partake of the fluid rice in the house of Vidura, and whether He was not satisfied with merely a leaf of the vegetable which Draupadī had given Him. Similarly, she implores Him to take His meals with them (Abg. 8).

11. The Teachings of Janabai

Janābāī's place among the spiritual poetesses Mahārāshtra is just next to that of Muktābāī. As Muktābāī derived her poetic inspiration from Jñānadeva, similarly, Janābāī derived hers from Nāmadeva. She tells us that as a fly in the vanity of pleasure falls upon the flame of a lamp, similarly, people in this life fall upon sensual pleasures in order to kill themselves. In this life, we should live as if we were the shadows of our body (Abg. 2). We should surpass the earth in forgiveness, be milder than butter, and lighter than a flower (Abg. 3). The weapon of a warrior, the treasure of a miser, the pearl on the temples of an elephant, the hood of a serpent, the nails of a lion, the breasts of a chaste woman, these shall never come to our hands. Similarly, unless we take leave of all egoism, God shall not come to our hands (Abg. 4). The only source of happiness in this life is betaking oneself to the Spiritual Teacher. We should hand him over all our wealth and body and mind, and take from him in exchange the form of God. This will not come to our vision without the grace of the Spiritual Teacher. It is already inside us; but we do not know that this is so. We wave a rosary of beads, and mutter numbers of prayers; but He who makes us wave the rosary, and inspires us with the saying of prayers, Him we do not know even though He is inside our hearts. He alone is the Spiritual Teacher, says Janābāī, who can show the Ātman directly to our vision (Abg. 5). Bhakti is indeed like a pit of cinders, or like a deep place in a river which is hard to approach. It is like a morsel of poison, or like the sharp edge of a sword. To be a real Bhakta, say Janābāī, is as difficult as any of the above things (Abg. 6). As a bird may go to roam in the sky and still think of its young one, or as a mother may be engaged in the house hold duties and yet may think of her child, or as a she-monkey may leap from tree to tree and yet may clasp its young one to her bosom, similarly, says Janābāī, we should always think of Vitthala. Occa-sionally, she grows wroth with Vitthala, and even goes to the length of abusing Him. Vithyā, Vithyā, Thou art the spoilt child of the Primeval Māyā.

Thy wife has become a courtesan. Thy body is dead. Janābāī stands in the court-yard of her house, and abuses Thee right and left (Abg. 10). It is only when we pen Vitthala within the prison of our heart, enchain Him with the power of the Name, beat Him with the lash of Self-identity, that Vitthala will cry piteously, and ask to be discharged for life (Abg. 11). Occasionally, Janābāī tells us that it was on account of the company of Nāmadeva that she was able to know Vitthala. As in the company of the bride-groom, people get dishes of all kinds, similarly, in the company of Nāmadeva, Janābāī has earned God (Abg. 12). First, there is a red circle, says Janābāī, above which there is a white one, beyond that is a dark-blue circle, and finally there is a full blue circle. Janābāī is greatly struck, she tells us, by hearing the unstruck sound (Abg. 13). She is entirely unable to describe the great flame of light which shines before her (Abg. 14). As she looks at God, she sees Him to her right and left, above and below, and in all quarters (Abg. 16). The form of God came upon Janābāī like a flood, by looking at which, Janābāī unconsciously shut her eyes (Abg. 17). Her weariness departed, her sin and torment were at an end. Where there is the Name of God, there can happen no calamity (Abg. 18). Janābāī tells us that a great miracle took place in the company of her Guru. The camphor was burnt, and no soot came out of it; the sugar was sown, and the sugar-cane was taken out; the ear became the eye ; an old woman was married to a child husband. This was the great wonder, she says, which she saw with her eyes, and which she could not explain (Abg. 20). Whatever desires she had harboured in her heart were fulfilled by God. He finally gave her a place in His own abode (Abg. 21). As the form of God became firmly fixed in Janābāī's mind, her bodily condition changed. Passion and attachment took leave of her. As Janābāī began to see, she saw that God Vitthala was standing at her door (Abg. 22). She tells us that she ate God, and drank God ; that she slept on God; that she gave God and took God ; that God was here, and God was there ; that there was no place which was not filled by God, either inside or outside (Abg. 23). As she began to sweep the floor of Nāmadeva's house, God came and took the refuse in a basket. He became so infatuated, that He began to do even mean work for her (Abg. 25). As God danced on mud with the potter Gorā, as He talked with Kabīra while the latter was weaving cloth, as He drove away the cows and buffaloes of the untouchable Chokhā, similarly, He now began to grind in the company of Janābāī, seeing which, she tells us, even the gods were pleased (Abg. 26). He who is befriended by God, becomes an object of favour for the whole world. God sees that such a devotee lacks nothing, and He takes on Himself the duty of protecting him in calamities. He does not stay away from His devotee even for a single moment, and on critical occasions, invariably lends His helping hand (Abg. 30).

12. The Teachings of Sena.

Senā, the barber, has no compromise with the evil-doers. He tells us that we should by all means dishonour the wicked, deal kicks to them, and drive them away. He who lives in the company of wicked men, says Senā, lives in perdition (Abg. 1). Like other saints, he also believes in the great efficacy of the Name. One does not require to inhale smoke, or to sit in the midst of the five fires. One has merely to make his mind calm, and with a concentrated attention sing the praises of God (Abg. 2). There is no other remedy except this, says Senā. God will surely come, and relieve His devotee. He makes no consideration of caste or quality. He runs at once to the cause of those who love Him (Abg. 3). One need not go to mountains and forests. If one goes to the forest, he would be deceived, as Vibhāndaka was deceived by a damsel. Knowing this, Senā sat where he was, and sent his submission to God (Abg. 4). He implores God to relieve him of his sins. I am a great evil-doer, says Senā. I have harboured passion and anger ; I have not cared for the company of the good ; nor have I meditated on God. I have censured those who have believed in God. I have entertained passion for wealth. Senā is a statue of sin incarnate, and bends in submission before God (Abg. 5). Blessed am I, he tells us, that I have seen Thy feet. All my previous merit has borne its fruit (Abg. 7). Today is a day of gold, says Senā, that he has seen the Saints (Abg. 9). The child of the powerful is itself powerful. All our sins will be forgiven us by our Father. Senā, sits under the shade of the wish-tree, and bears compassion towards all (Abg. 10). Senā describes how he was given to the art of shaving even in spiritual life. We are greatly skilled in the art of shaving, says Senā. We show the mirror of discrimination, and use the pinches of dispassion. We apply the water of tranquillity to the head, and screw out the hair of egotism. We take away the nails of passion, and are a support to all the four castes, says Senā (Abg. 11). In two of his Abhangas, Senā informs us that be departed from this life at midday on the 12th of the dark half of Srāvana (Abgs. 12, 13).

13. The Teachings of Kanhopatra.

Kānhopātrā, the beautiful daughter of a dancing woman of Mang-alavedhā, tells us that it is bad pursuit to follow the path of sensual pleasure. Indra's body became verily perforated ; Bhasmāsura was reduced to ashes ; the Moon bears the sinful spots on her body ; Rāvana lost his life, because he gave himself to carnal pleasure (Abg. 1). I am verily an outcast, says Kānhopātrā. I do not know the rules of conduct. I only know how to approach Thee in submission (Abg. 2). Thou callest Thyself the reliever of the fallen. Why dost Thou not lift me up? I have once called myself Thine. If I am now obliged to call myself another's, on whom would the blame rest? If a jackal were to take away the food of a lion, who would be blamed, asks Kānhopātrā (Abg. 3) ? This Abhanga she probably composed when she was invited by the Mahomedan king of Bedar to visit his court. When she saw the image of Vitthala, she says, it seemed as if her spiritual merit had reached its consummation. Happy am I, she says, that I have seen Thy feet (Abg. 4). The very God of Death would be terrified if we utter the Name of God. Ajāmela, Vālmīki, and even a Courtesan have been lifted up by the Name of God. Kānhopātrā tells us that she wears the garland of God's Names (Abg. 5).

CHAPTER III.

General Review.

There are certain characteristics which mark off the saints of this period from the saints who belong either to the earlier or the later period in the development of Mahārāshtra Mysticism. In the first place, these mystics are cosmopolitans. They recognise a spiritual democracy all round. Prof. W. B. Patwardhan has well described the democracy of the Bhakti school, as represented in Nāmadeva and his contemporaries: "The gates of the Bhakti school were ever open. Whoever entered was hailed as a brother-nay more-was honoured as a saint. He was addressed as a 'Santa'. All were ' Santas' that gathered round and under the Garudatakā, the flag with the eagle blazoned on it, with Tāla or cymbals in hand, and the name of Vitthala on the tongue. The very atmosphere was sacred and holy. The breath of Heaven played freely, and all were equal there. Love-true-genuine-pure love admits not of high and low, rich and poor; all is one and equal. All separatist tendencies vanished; the haughty isolation of Pride, of Heredity, of Tradition melted away, and all were but men, human, weak, frail, feeble, lame, and blind, calling on the same strength, seeking the same love, hoping the same hope, dreaming the same dream, and seeing the same vision. Before Vithobā or Dattātreya, or Nāganātha-call him by any name-all were equal. Age and sex, caste and class, breathed not in this equalising air. In the joy of Love, in the bliss of the service of the Lord, in the dance round the Flag of devotion - all were inspired with the same fire; they ate of the same dish, drank of the same well, bathed in the same Chandrabhāgā or Krishnā or Godā or Bānagangā, lay on the same sands, and waked to the same dawn. For five successive centuries, Mahārāshtra was the abode of that noblest and truest of all Democracies, the Democracy of the Bhakti school". In the second place, all these saints are characterised by a contrition of the heart, by the helplessness of human endeavour to reach unaided the majesty of God, by a sense of sinfulness inherent to human nature, by the necessity of finding out a Guru who may relieve them from the sufferings of the world, and finally, by the phenomena of conversion almost in every individual case. Each saint indeed has an individuality of his own even in his spiritual development. In the third place, it seems as if the mystics of this period show an all-absorbing love of God, which would not allow a rightful performance of one's duties before God-absorption. It is true that these saints show that God could be realised in any walk of life; but they also show that God is a very jealous God, who would not allow any love to be given to any other object beside Himself. The tailor, the barber, the maid-servant, the gardener, the sweeper, the potter, the goldsmith, even the nautch-girl, could all realise God in their different stations of life. But as to whether they could continue in a rightful performance of their duties in the state of God-realisation is a different question. It seems that these saints gave themselves up to God-love, and forgot everything else before it. The conflict between a rightful performance of duty and an all-absorbing love of God has existed at all times and in all countries. But it seems that the saints of this period inclined the beam in the latter rather than in the former direction, and exhibited the all-absorbing character of God-realisation. God indeed is an all-devourer, and it seems from the example of these saints that He devours also the performance of one's own natural duties. The saints of the age we shall consider in our next section show rather the opposite tendency, namely, the tendency of making compatible the love of God and the rightful performance of Duty. Janārdana Swāmī was a saint, while he was yet a fighter. Ekanātha was a saint, while he was yet a householder. We shall see as we proceed to consider the lives and teachings of these saints in the next part of this work how this conflict is resolved in a synthetic performance of Duty in the midst of God-realisation.

THE ABHANGAS OF NAMADEVA.

(References are to our Source-books.)

Abhanga	Pages	Abhanga	Pages	Abhanga	Page
11	14	61	18	115	23
13	14	64	18	120	23
14	14	66	18	121	23
16	14	67	18	122	23
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19	15	72	18	125	23
20	15	75	18	127	24
22	15	77	19	128	24
23	15	80	19	130	24
24	15	83	19	134	24
28	15	85	20	135	25
30	16	87	20	137	25
31	16	90	20	139	25
32	16	91	20	140	25
35	16	92	20	141	25
36	16	94	21	142	25
37	16	95	21	143	26
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41	16	102	21	145	26
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47	17	106	22	147	26
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51	17	109	22	149	27
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THE ABHANGAS OF GORA.

(References are to our Source-books.)

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THE ABHANGAS OF VISOBA.

(References are to our Source-books.)

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THE ABHANGAS OF SAMVATA.

(References are to our Source-books.)

Abhanga	Page	Abhanga	Page	Abhanga	Page
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THE ABHANGAS OF NARAHARI.

(References are to our Source-books.)

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THE ABHANGAS OF CHOKHAMELA.

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THE ABHANGAS OF SENA.

(References are to our Source-books.)

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2	35	7	36	12,13	36
3	36	9	36		
4	36	10	36		

THE ABHANGAS OF KANHOPATRA.

(References are to our Source-books.)

Abhanga	Page	Abhanga	Page	Abhanga	Page
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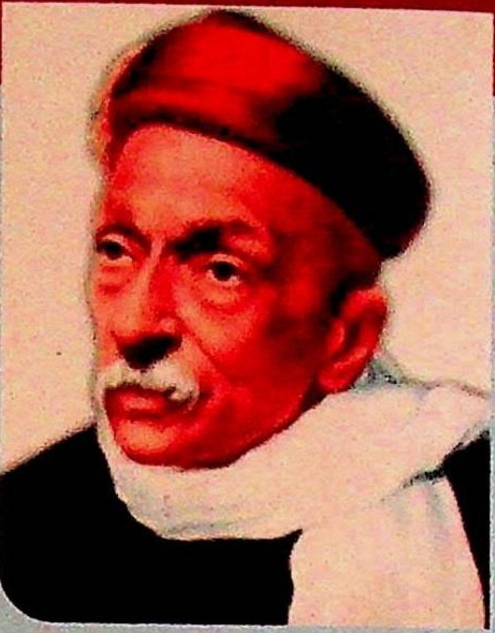
About the Author



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